Fighting Insurgency in Iraq: How the US Army Transformed Itself to Combat a Highly Adaptive Foe

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Given the US entrance into a third war and the current state of international security and stability, thinking that there will only be one Iraq or that counterinsurgent warfare will not be here for the long haul would be foolhardy. It is incredibly important that the US Army learn from its experiences in the Iraq War so to better prepare for our future. Chad C. Serena’s new book, *A Revolution in Military Adaptation*, provides this necessary framework for learning: investigating why the Army had to adapt, how it did so, and why it needs to remain flexible in the future.

During the early years of the Iraq War, the US Army was unable to translate initial combat success into strategic and political victory. Iraq plunged into a complex insurgency, and defeating this insurgency required beating highly adaptive foes. A competition between the hierarchical and vertically integrated army and networked and horizontally integrated insurgents ensued. The latter could quickly adapt and conduct networked operations in a decentralized fashion; the former was predisposed to fighting via prescriptive plans under a centralized command and control.

To achieve success, the US Army went through a monumental process of organizational adaptation—a process driven by soldiers and leaders that spread throughout the institution and led to revolutionary changes in how the army supported and conducted its operations in Iraq. How the army adapted and the implications of this adaptation are the subject of this study. Intended for policymakers, defense and military professionals, military historians, and academics, this book offers a solid critique of the army’s current capacity to adapt to likely future adversary strategies and provides policy recommendations for retaining lessons learned in Iraq.

Peter R. Mansoor of the Ohio State University praises the book as “a significant addition to the literature on the renaissance of the American military in the post-9/11 period. *A Revolution in Military Adaptation* explains the US Army’s unpreparedness for the messy wars after 9/11 and the process by which it adapted into a more balanced force that could prosecute counterinsurgency and stability operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. A superior work of scholarship.”

Chad C. Serena works at the RAND Corporation, where he analyzes national security issues with a focus on US Army strategy and doctrine. He received his PhD from the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh. He has previously served as a military intelligence officer, a signals intelligence officer, and in various information operations positions in the US Army’s Second Stryker brigade at Fort Lewis, Washington.

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